Class 10: Print Culture *Ch: 5*

Q.1. Give reasons for the following:

a) Woodblock print only came to Europe after 1295.

Ans: The earliest print technology that is the Woodblock printing was invented in 594 A.D by China and kept it secret for centuries. For a very long time, the imperial state of China was the major producer of printed material. China was not having any extensive relation with Europe. China preferred the policy of isolation from the rest of the world during early modern times. It was Marco Polo, a great Italian explorer, who learnt the art and technique of woodblock print from China and brought it to Italy in 1295 after many years of exploration of China. Soon the technology spread to many parts of Europe. The print in woodcut, later joined by engraving, quickly became an important cultural tradition for popular religious works, as well as playing cards and other uses. Before 1295, manuscripts were written by scribes all over Europe.

b) Martin Luther was in favour of print and spoke out in praise of it.

Ans: Martin Luther (1483-1546) was a German monk and a religious reformer who encouraged the process of reformation in Christian religion. In 1517 he wrote Ninety Five theses in which he criticised and challenged the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. A printed copy of this was pasted on a church door in Wittenberg. It challenged the Church to debate his ideas. He was deeply in favour of print because his works of criticism reached a large number of people through printed copies. This led to a division within the Church and to the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. He also translated the New Testament of which 5000 copies were sold within a few weeks and a second edition appeared within three months. These were impossible without the printing technology. Deeply grateful to print, Luther said that printing was the ultimate gift of God which helped to create a new intellectual atmosphere and helped spread the new ideas that led to the reformation. This is the reason why Luther was in favour of print and spoke out in praise of it.

c) The Roman Catholic Church began to keep an index of prohibited books from the mid 16th century.

Ans: Due to the print culture, religious literature stimulated a variety of faith even among the little educated working class in the early 16th century. The new interpretations of the Bible reached to the common people who began to question the faith and authority of the Roman Catholic Church. For example, a miller in Italy, Menocchio began to read books that were available in his locality. He reinterpreted the message of the Bible and formulated a view of God and Creation that enraged the Roman Catholic Church. Such instances worried the Church about people reading the various interpretations of the religion and questioning the faith and authority of the Church. Menocchio was declared a culprit by the Roman Catholic court and finally executed. Therefore, in order to restrict the spread of Protestantism the Roman Catholic Church exercised strict control over publishers and booksellers and began to keep an index of prohibited books from 1558 to preserve the orthodox thought and to answer the common people.

d) Gandhi said the fight for Swaraj is the fight for liberty of speech, liberty of press and freedom of association.

Ans: Although Swaraj literally means self-rule, however for Gandhi, Swaraj was a continuous effort to be independent of government control, whether it was foreign or national. The power of the printing world is often seen in the way government seeks to regulate and suppress print. The colonial government of India kept continuous track of all the books and newspapers published in India and passed numerous laws to curb their liberty. For example, in 1878, Vernacular Press Act was passed to curb the freedom of press in India. Similarly the freedom of association was threatened when Indian National Congress, a democratic association of people was declared illegal on many occasions. Because of this attitude of the government Gandhi during the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22) said that the fight for Swaraj is a fight for liberty of speech, liberty of press and freedom of association.

Q.2. Write short notes on:

a) <u>The Gutenberg Press:</u> Gutenberg Press was the first printing press invented by a German goldsmith Johann Gutenberg of Germany between 1436 and 1448. Before the invention of this press, books were written by hand and they were very costly. So the poor could not afford to buy them. But the Gutenberg press made books within the reach of all people. The model for his printing press was derived from olive press. The Gutenberg Press consisted of an iron frame and a printing block placed over paper. The printing block was pressed down by a screw attached with a long handle. Gutenberg had developed metal types for each of the 26 characters of the Roman alphabet and devised a way of moving them. The machine could print 250 sheets on one side per hour. The Bible was the first book that was printed by the Gutenberg Press. Gutenberg Press remained the basic printing technology over the next 300 years. Within the hundred years between 1450 and 1550, printing presses were set up in most countries of Europe, which set off the printing revolution during 16^{th} century onwards. Because of Gutenberg Press, books could now be produced much faster, so during 16^{th} century, some 200 million copies of printed books were made available in the market of Europe. For its advantages, Martin Luther hailed print as the ultimate gift of God.

b) <u>Erasmus's idea of the printed book:</u> Erasmus was a Latin scholar and a Catholic reformer who criticized the corrupt practices in Christianity. He criticised the excesses of Catholicism but kept his distance from Martin Luther. His important writings include "Praise of Folly" and "Colloquies" Erasmus was deeply concerned about printing of books. He believed that though some books do provide worthwhile knowledge, others are simply bane for scholarship. He expressed his deep anxiety about printing in Adages (1508) that the multitude of printed books is harmful to the quality scholarship because it creates a glut (a situation where supply is greater than demand and need). Erasmus accused that most of the printed books give stupid, scandalous, irreligious and seditious ideas which may lead to incitement of rebellion and because of these books, the quality of valuable publication was also threatened.

c) <u>The Vernacular Press Act:</u> With the growth of political consciousness and the beginning of political activities by Indians in later part of the 19^{th} century, there was a great increase in the number of Indian newspaper and journals. Some of the English newspapers which were owned by the British were supporters of the British rule, whereas most of the others, both in English and Indian languages, criticised the British rule. The Vernacular press Act was passed in 1878 by the British Government during the British Governor General Lord Lytton. The purpose of the Act was to regulate the censorship of Indian press and to curtail its freedom which could produce disaffection against the British Government of India. This act was modelled on the basis of Irish Press Laws. It provided the government with extensive powers to censor the reports and editorials in the local press of India. Under this act the government kept regular track of the newspapers published in different provinces and in different languages. If any Indian newspaper reported on colonial misrule and encouraged nationalist activities, it was first warned and then seized by confiscating its property. The act excluded English- language publications. There were 35 vernacular papers in circulation at the time when the Vernacular Press Act was passed.

Q.3. What did the spread of print culture in the 19^{th} century India meant to:

a) <u>Women:</u> Women carved their own space in the 19^{th} century in Indian press. Their lives and feelings began to be written in different ways. Many journals carried writings by the women of liberal class about the introduction of women education. However the conservative Hindus and Muslim women were reluctant towards the culture. Some Bengali women such as Kailashbashini Debi and Pandita Ramabai wrote books highlighting the experiences of women about the household exploitation and unjust behaviour. The print culture in 19^{th} century helped in spread of the feeling of self-reliance among Indian women.

b) <u>The poor:</u> As the literacy rate improved in India, printed material, especially for entertainment began to reach even the poor in the 19th century. The poor people were benefited from the spread of print culture in India on account of the availability of low price books and public libraries. Those who could not read could listen to stories and folklore. These could be read out to them by others. Enlightening essays were written against caste discrimination and its inherent injustices. For example, Jyotiba Phule was from a 'low caste' wrote his book Gulamgiri in 1871, in which he wrote about the injustice of the caste system. These were read by the people across the country. On the encouraging support of social reformers, over worked factory workers set up libraries for self education and some of them even published their own works for e.g. Kashibaba and his " Chhote aur bade ka sawal" published in 1938 to show the links between caste and class exploitation.

c) <u>Reformers:</u> Indian reformers of 19th century like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Jyotiba Phule, and Kailashbashini Debi etc. utilized print culture as the most potent means of spreading their reformist ideas and highlight the unethical issues. They began publishing various vernacular and English and Hindi newspapers and books through which they could spread their opinions against widow immolation, child marriage, monotheism, Brahmanical priesthood and idolatry to the common people of the country. In this way the spread of print culture in the 19th century provided them a space for attacking religious orthodoxy and to spread modern social and political ideas to the people of different languages across the country.

Q.4. Why did some people in 18th century Europe think that print culture would bring enlightenment and end despotism?

Ans. Many people in 18th century Europe thought that the print culture has the power in it to bring enlightenment and end despotism. As books were available at cheap rates and also in every corner of the European continent, it helped in the increase in literacy rate as literacy ratio in some parts of Europe were high as 60% and in other parts as high as 80% during 18th century, that means literacy was no longer be restricted to the upper classes.

The ideas of scientists and philosophers became more accessible to the common people. Scientists like Isaac Newton began to publish their discoveries and influenced a much wider circle of scientifically minded readers. Social reformers like Louise-Sebastian Mercier and Martin Luther felt that print culture is the most powerful engine of progress and public opinion they also felt that print culture would mark an end to the blind adherence to the rulers' ideology. This can be seen from French Revolution as print medium allowed the ideas of freedom equality and brother hood set forth by Rousseau and Voltaire in their writings to reach the public.

Print culture also created a new culture of dialogue and debate that initiated the working class into questioning and revaluating social customs and norms. The power of reason that public gained initiated social reforms and brought an end to despotism.

Q.5. Why did some people fear the effect of easily available printed books? Choose one example from Europe and one from India.

Ans. The people who feared the effect of easily availability of printed books were those who held some power, whether the power was in terms of religion, caste class, economic and politic the cause of their fear was that due to the spread of literacy among the common people, they may loss their power as the power and authority may be questioned. Some people also feared that this may lead to the spread of rebellions and irreligious thoughts.

For example:

In Europe, the Roman Catholic Church conveyed its sense of apprehension for the printed medium by stating that the promotion of new printed readings of faith would lead to blasphemous questioning of faith and encourage heretical ideas. It considered itself to be the sole authority of interpreting religion. Hence, it setup the index of prohibited books in 1558 to repress any published material that it felt is against its authority and power.
In India the Vernacular Press Act passed by Lord Lytton in 1878 imposed restrictions on various newspapers. It provided the government with extensive rights to censor reports and editorials in the vernacular press. Also some religious leaders understood that their religions and social superiority was in danger due to the easily accessible promoted ideas contradicting their system of beliefs.

Q.6. Explain how print culture assisted the growth of nationalism in India.

Ans: Print culture played a major role to unite people and strengthen the national movement during colonial rule in India. It was because of the print culture that made common people to read and discuss the ideas of their leaders and the events that occurred in the country.
The print culture immensely helped the growth of nationalism in India in the following ways.
1. The Vernacular Press Act passed in 1878 imposed restrictions on various newspapers which reported oppressive methods of colonial rule in India. The misrule of the government and its initiative on curbing the freedom of press spread the nationalist ideas that demanded freedom of press.
2. Nationalist feelings and revolutionary ideas were secretly spread by the dailies like the Amrit Bazaar Patrika, Bombay Samachar, Kesri, The Hindu, The Indian mirror etc. Through these newspapers national leaders always tried to mobilize public opinion of Indian masses and unite them for the cause of nationalism.
3. The print culture helped in educating the people who then started to be gradually influenced by the reformist and nationalist ideas of the various Indian leaders like Raja-Ram Mohan Roy, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Subhash Chandra Bose and Mahatma Gandhi.
4. Various image of Bharat Mata Painters like Raja Ravi Verma and Abindranath Tagore drew images of Bharat Mata which produced a sense of nationalism among Indians. The devotion to mother figure came to be seen as an evidence of one’s nationalism.

Q.7. What were the effects of the spread of print culture for poor people in nineteenth century India?

Ans: As the literacy rate improved in India, printed material, especially for entertainment began to reach even the poor in the 19th century. The poor people were benefited from the spread of print culture in India on account of the availability of low price books and public libraries. Those who could not read could listen to stories and folklore. These could be read out to them by others. Enlightening essays were written against caste discrimination and its inherent injustices. For example, Jyotiba Phule was from a ‘low caste’ wrote his book Gulamgiri in 1871, in which he wrote about the injustice of the caste system. These were read by the people across the country. On the encouraging support of social reformers, over worked factory workers set up libraries for self education and some of them even published their own works for e.g. Kashibaba and his “ Chhote aur bade ka sawal” published in 1938 to show the links between caste and class exploitation. Mill workers all over the country set up libraries to educate themselves.
Thus, the spread of print culture helped to restrict excessive drinking among the poor, to bring literacy, to give way to the shackles of caste system and to propagate the message of nationalism.